duty was affected, if so, what is Government's decision thereon;

(d) what were the reasons and circumstances leading to the hike; and

(e) what was the total amount of excise duty chargeable on these items with respect to production made during the period from Februray 28, to April 23, 1993.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.V. CHANDRASHEKHAR MURTHY) : (a) Yes, Madam.

(b) A representation dated 12-3-1993 was received from the Process Plant and Machinery Association of India requesting a concessional rate of duty for machinery/plant/laboratory equipment of the types in question. Having considered their suggestion, Notification No. 83/93-CE dated 23-4-1993 has been issued prescribing a concessional rate of duty of 15 per cent advl. on machinery, plant or laboratory equipment, for treatment of material by condensing or cooling (excluding refrigerating and air conditioning machinery and parts thereof) and falling under heading no. 84.19 of the Schedule to the Central Excise Tariff Act, 1985.

(c) The Association has represented for issue of notification/corrigendum to ensure that no demands are raised on the assessees manufacturing and clearing such goods during the period from 28-2-1993 to 22-4-1993. Field formations have been advised not to take coercive action on this issue.

(d) While reducing the duty on capital goods falling under heading 84.19, the description of the goods was changed without any intention of changing the scope of the exemption. This, however, led to increase in duty on machinery, plant and laboratory equipment which treats material by condensing or cooling other than refrigeration and air conditioning machinery such as cooling towers etc., from pre-budget rate of 15 per cent to 110 per cent.

(e) Not known.

CHARGING COMPOUND INTEREST FROM FARMERS

2570. SHRI BHUPINDER SINGH MANN : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that commercial banks are not allowed to charge compound interest from the farmers;

(b) whether it is also a fact that this principle is not being adhered to;

(c) what steps Government propose to take to stop this malpractice; and

(d) what mechanism Government propose to resort to ensure refund of the amount charged in excess ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (DR. ABRAR AHMED) : (a) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has given instructions to all scheduled commercial banks regarding compounding of interest on agricultural advances, the details of which are as follows :—

(i) Payment of interest should be insisted upon only at the time of repayment of loans/instalments so fixed;

(ii) Interest on current dues should not be compounded;

(iii) Interest should not be compounded on dues from Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) ceded to commercial banks;

(iv) when crop loans or instalments under term loans become overdue, banks can add interest outstanding to the principal and compound the interest. However, total interest debited to an account should not exceed the principal amount in respect of short term advances granted to small and marginal farmers.

(b) to (d) During periodic inspection of bank branches compliance with the above instructions is verified and banks advised to rectify the position where deficiencies are observed. On complaints representations, the matter is taken up with the concerned banks.

GOLD BOND SCHEME

2571. SHRI SURESH KALMADI :
SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether attention of Government has been drawn to the news item published in the Hindustan Times of 10th December, 1993 under the caption "Revamped gold bond scheme may be back"; and

(b) if so, what is Government"s reaction thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.V. CHANDRASHEKHAR MURTHY) : (a) Yes Sir.

(b) There is no proposal under consideration at present.

STREAMLINING THE FUNCTIONING OF AAIFR

2572. SHRI V. GOPALSAMY : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) how many cases are pending before the Appellate Authority for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction as on date;

(b) how many cases have been disposed of by AAIFR during the last three years year-wise;

(c) how many cases were instituted before AAIFR durding this period;

(d) what steps are being taken to dispose off the cases quickly; and

(e) whether there is any proposal to streamline the functioning of AAIFR ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (DR. ABRAR AHMED) : (a) to (e) The Appellate Authority for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (AAIFR) have reported that 120 cases are pending before them as on 15-12-1993. The number of cases received and disposed of during 1991, 1992 and 1993 is as under :

Year	No. of cases received	No. of cases disposed
1991 . . .	122	110
1992 . . .	116	46
1993 . . . (as on 15-12-1993)	141	195

The table above indicates that the disposal of cases by AAIFR during 1993 has been more than the number of cases received during the year.

PHASING OUT OF GRANT TO EXPORT COUNCILS

2573. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government's grant to export promotion council including engineering export promotion council is being phased out;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor indicating what would be the fate of these organisations and more than 50,000 employees thereof in the event of com-